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Housekeepers' Chat

Monday, January 6, 1931

NOT FOR PUBLICATION

Subject: "A New England Supper." Menu and recipes from the Bureau of Home Economics, U. S. D. A.

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"A recipe for real New England baked beans with a flavor like those my grandmother up in Bradford, Massachusetts, used to make" is what one letter that arrived recently asked me for.

When I read that letter I hurried over to the Menu Specialist and said, "Couldn't you plan a New England supper for Monday? Here's a friend of mine who wants to serve that good old American dish, baked beans, and I'd like to have some suggestions as to suitable dishes to serve with it."

The Menu Specialist took out her pen and wrote BAKED BEANS in large letters at the top of the page. Of course, you already guessed what she wrote directly under it. Only one guess allowed to all those with New England blood in their veins. Right. Boston brown bread.

While she was planning two good vegetables and a dessert to serve with the beans and brown bread, I went to see the Recipe Lady.

"Have you directions for making baked beans with a genuine old-fashioned flavor? I want the kind that were being made by one of the best housekeepers in Bradford, Massachusetts, a generation ago."

"Do you know what gives baked beans the best flavor?" asked the Recipe Lady.

I thought of several things, but before I had time to answer, she continued, "The secret of good flavor is long slow cooking. And I recommend baking in an old-fashioned bean pot. I'm sure any New England housekeeper will agree with me."

I'll read you the recipe she gave me for Boston baked beans. There are six ingredients:

2 cups of dried beans  
1/2 pound of salt pork  
4 tablespoons of molasses

1 teaspoon of mustard, if desired  
1 1/2 teaspoons of salt, and  
1/2 of a single onion, if desired.

Those last three ingredients, the mustard, salt and onion, depend on your own preferences as to the amount used. You can omit the mustard or the



onion or both, if you don't care for the flavor, but the Recipe Lady, whose opinion I value very highly, thinks the beans are far more delicious if flavored this way. As for the amount of salt used, that depends on how salty the pork is. One teaspoon of salt, or even less, may be quite sufficient if the pork is very salty.

I'll read those ingredients once again:

2 cups of dried beans	1 teaspoon of mustard, if desired
1/2 pound of salt pork	1 1/2 teaspoons of salt, and
4 tablespoons of molasses	1/2 of a small onion if desired.

Soak the beans overnight in enough cold water to cover them. In the morning, drain them, add a quart of fresh water, simmer for 45 minutes, or until the beans begin to soften, and drain them again. Score the rind of the salt pork and put half the pork and the onion in the bottom of the bean pot. Add the beans. Mix the molasses, mustard, and salt with a little hot water, and pour over the beans. Add enough hot water to cover them. Place the rest of the salt pork on top, cover the pot, and cook the beans in a slow oven (about 250 degrees F.) for 6 or 7 hours. Add a little hot water from time to time to replace that which cooks away or is absorbed by the beans. Keep the lid on the bean pot until the last hour of cooking. Then uncover, and allow the beans and pork on the top to brown.

Doesn't that sound like grandmother's cookery?

Now for the menu.

Baked Beans; Boston Brown Bread; Stewed Tomatoes with Celery; Cold Slaw; Baked Apples, or Apple Pie. I'll repeat that New England supper menu. (REPEAT)

Boston brown bread may be made with either sweet or sour milk, and I have a splendid recipe for that to give you today also. Before I begin, let me tell you that you can use two or three kinds of flour to make this brown bread. Use either corn meal and graham flour or substitute rye meal for half of that cornmeal. I'll read the ingredients now:

1 cup of rye meal and 1 cup of corn meal
or
2 cups of corn meal
1 cup of graham flour
1 teaspoon of salt
3/4 cups of molasses
2 cups of sour milk and 1-1/2 teaspoons of soda
or
2 cups of sweet milk, 1/4 teaspoon of soda and 4 teaspoons of baking powder

I'll say that list over again. (Repeat)

Mix the dry ingredients and add the molasses and the milk. Beat the mixture thoroughly, and pour into greased molds until they are about three-fourths full. Cover loosely to keep out the moisture and steam for 3 and 1/2 hours. Remove the covers and bake the bread in a moderate oven for about ten minutes to dry it off.



Here's a helpful hint about cutting the bread, if it seems likely to crumble. Loop a clean string around the loaf and cut slices by pulling the ends of the string. That is often a safer and neater way to cut any soft material than to use a knife. Large cakes of new, somewhat soft soap can be cut in half the same way.

But I'm wandering from my supper. Where was I? Oh, yes, the next item is stewed tomatoes with celery. Simmer diced celery in canned tomatoes for twenty to twenty-five minutes, or until the celery is tender. Season with salt, pepper, and butter or other fat and serve. By the way, this is a way to use the outer stalks of celery that are too good to be discarded, yet not perfect enough to serve raw. This same recipe may be used if you wish to substitute finely shredded cabbage for celery. Let the tomatoes cook alone for about fifteen minutes and then add the shredded cabbage. Cook those together for about ten minutes before seasoning and serving.

Turn to page 63 in the green cook book and there you will find a recipe for apple pie, if you want one. The recipe calls for tart apples, and I would like to add that the best apples for cooking are not only tart in flavor, but are also juicy, and fine-textured. Dry, mealy or too mild apples don't give much character to a pie. The same holds true for baked apples.

Tomorrow: "Home Comfort in Mid-Winter."

